

MILESTONES IN THE CAREER OF TIBULLUS*

This paper begins from the premiss that Ovid knew more about certain mundane facts of Augustan literary history than we do. It focuses on the publication of one work, the first book of Tibullus, but its conclusions have consequences for the literary interpretation of the first three Roman elegists—Gallus, Tibullus, and Propertius—which can only be indicated here, not fully explored.¹ We know very little about the actual circumstances in which most of the landmarks of Augustan literature appeared before the public or the dates when they became generally available. Virgil's *Eclogues*, for example, may have appeared as early as 39 B.C. or as late as 35, depending upon how the internal evidence—the only evidence—is interpreted.² Scholars infer that the publication of Horace's first book of *Satires* took place around 35, but this is inference only; and the evidence for the appearance of the *Epodes* in the late 30s together with the second book of *Satires* is just as insubstantial.³ Not surprisingly, our evidence for the publication of lost works by important authors of the triumviral period is even scantier. Gallus' elegies can only be dated by the *terminus ante* established by Virgil's *Eclogues*, which only means that at least some, but perhaps not all, of Gallus' poetry is earlier than 39 or 35. Finally, the *Monobiblos* of Propertius is assigned to a date prior to 28 on the evidence of one datable reference and a vague sense that the poems in this book reflect a mood earlier than other Augustan works.⁴

Against this backdrop of uncertainty, it has seemed as if the Tibullan corpus offered a secure point of reference. The seventh poem of the first book refers, or seems to refer, to two certainly datable events, providing a firm *terminus post*: the triumph celebrated by Messalla on 25 September, 27 B.C. and the repairs made by him to the Via Latina after his triumph. The composition of this elegy and the publication of the first book consequently are dated to the year 26 or perhaps 25. This chronology is not without some consequence for the development of Latin elegy and the literary affiliations of its practitioners. For it then follows that Tibullus' first book appeared only after Propertius' first, a chronology that has achieved broad consensus among

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¹ For lack of a better term, I use the word 'publication' to refer to the final distribution of a completed work, aware as I do so of all the anachronistic associations of the term.

² The consensus of scholars inclines to the earlier date. For a summary, see A. Perutelli, 'Bucolics', in N. Horsfall (ed.), *A Companion to the Study of Virgil* (Leiden, 1995), 28–31. Arguments for a later date, however, cannot be entirely dismissed, for which see most recently W. Clausen, *Virgil: Eclogues* (Oxford, 1994), 233–6.

³ The dates are inferred from the latest datable references in the first book of *Satires*, the journey to Brundisium in 38 or 37 (1.5), and the second book, the settlement of veterans in 30 (2.6.55–6). The date of the *Epodes* is generally fixed by the references to Actium in *Epod.* 1 and 9. For a summary of the data and interpretation, see G. D'Anna, 'Questioni Cronologiche', in S. Mariotti (ed.), *Enciclopedia Oraziana* 1 (Rome, 1996), 259–64.

⁴ See, most recently, R. O. A. M. Lyne, 'Propertius and Tibullus: early exchanges', *CQ* 48 (1998), 520–1.

scholars.⁵ This relative chronology also underpins most discussions of the intertextual relationship of the two elegists, with Tibullus emerging as the imitator.⁶ That there is an intertextual relationship between these two poets is clear on any close reading of the lexical and thematic parallels in the two books. That of the two poets Tibullus should be the imitator is a logical conclusion to be drawn from the chronology outlined above. But there are problems with this scenario.

It would be difficult to argue for Propertian influence in Tibullus without this chronological prop but, once this dating was accepted, the intertextual argument has served in turn to support the relative dating. Indeed, it is striking to reflect upon the degree to which entirely subjective assessments of literary influence have played a role in supporting an otherwise tenuous chronology. One example will suffice. In the opening elegy of his first book, Tibullus describes his own funeral, as he imagines it, with his mistress Delia present:

flebis et arsuro positum me, Delia, lecto,
tristibus et lacrimis oscula mixta dabis.
flebis: non tua sunt duro praecordia ferro
uincta, neque in tenero stat tibi corde silex.
illo non iuuenis poterit de funere quisquam
lumina, non uirgo, sicca referre domum.
tu Manes ne laede meos, sed parce solutis
crinibus et teneris, Delia, parce genis. (Tib. 1.1.61–8)

It is now generally accepted that Tibullus is imitating an earlier treatment of this motif of the poet imagining his own death and funeral, in the seventeenth poem of Propertius' *Monobiblos*:

illa meo caros donasset funere crinis,
molliter et tenera poneret ossa rosa;
illa meum extremo clamasset puluere nomen,
ut mihi non ullo pondere terra foret. (Prop. 1.17.21–4)

According to one recent commentator,

[I]n both passages the emphasis is on dutiful observance and mourning at the poet's funeral. Tibullus underlines this idea by two details not found in Propertius' version (the mourning of the youth of Rome at 65f. and the appeal to the mistress not to grieve excessively at 67f., where *parce* ... / *crinibus* may be intended to outdo Prop. 1.17.21). These two details look like an attempt to improve on Propertius.⁷

⁵ This position was staked out in A. Cartault, *Tibulle et les auteurs du Corpus Tibullianum* (Paris, 1909), 23, and reaffirmed by A. Rostagni, 'Tibulliana', *RFIC* 65 (1937), 358. It is reflected in standard handbooks (e.g. *OCD*³ s.v. 'Tibullus'; F. Marx, *RE* 1.1 [1894], 1320) and literary histories (e.g. Schanz Hosi 182; *CHCL* II.853; G. B. Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, trans. J. B. Solodow [Baltimore and London, 1994], 326). Among commentators on Tibullus over the last century there is general agreement on 27/26 B.C. for the publication of the first book: e.g. K. F. Smith, *The Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (New York, 1913), 43; L. Dissen, *Albii Tibulli carmina* (Göttingen, 1935), xx; M. C. J. Putnam, *Tibullus: A Commentary* (Norman, 1973), 4; P. Murgatroyd, *Tibullus I. A Commentary on the First Book of the Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (Natal, 1980), 11; G. Lee, *Tibullus: Elegies* (Leeds, 1990³), ix; R. Maltby, *Tibullus: Elegies. Text, Introduction and Commentary* (Leeds, 2002), 39–40. M. Ponchont, *Tibulle et les auteurs du Corpus Tibullianum* (Paris, 1955), ix, dates Book 1 even later to 26/25 and Schanz Hosi 182 is willing to admit a date as late as 24.

⁶ See most recently Murgatroyd (n. 5), 13–15, and Lyne (n. 4), both of whom supply abundant references to relevant bibliography.

⁷ Murgatroyd (n. 5), 14. W. Wimmel, *Tibull und Delia* (Wiesbaden, 1976), 93–111 argues that Tib. 1.3 echoes Prop. 1.6, 1.9, and 1.17, while D. Bright, *Haec mihi fingebam: Tibullus in his World* (Leiden, 1978), 17, n. 5 is rightly sceptical.

But looks can be deceiving, especially when influenced by preconceptions, such as the assumption of Propertius' priority. One may ask if it is likely that critics would have arrived at such an interpretation of this intertextual link, if there were absolutely no external evidence for the assumed chronology. Indeed, there is little or no evidence that either poet refers to the other here, no verbal markers signalling an allusion. And the thematic relationship, I would suggest, could be better explained if Tibullus' formulation were the earlier of the two. On this reading Propertius alludes briefly to the more fully developed formulation of the topos in an earlier poem. There is also the further consideration that our only contemporary testimony about the relative chronology of Propertius and Tibullus explicitly contradicts the consensus of modern scholars that Tibullus follows Propertius. It comes from the autobiographical tenth elegy in the fourth book of Ovid's *Tristia*:

Vergilium uidi tantum, nec avara Tibullo
tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.
successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi;
quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui. (4.10.51–54)

Modern scholars who do not ignore this testimony either reject it outright or vainly try to wish it away.⁸ Ovid, it is sometimes asserted, must be referring to the poets' ages or dates of death,⁹ not the publication of their works. This line of reasoning is at best special pleading. Ovid clearly delineates a literary succession,¹⁰ in which he is vitally concerned to include himself, and he clearly sees Tibullus as Rome's second elegist, successor to Cornelius Gallus. On this basis alone it seems worth the effort to reconsider the evidence supporting the late date of Tibullus 1.7 and the judgement of modern scholars that Ovid was wrong.

I. MESSALLA'S PROCONSULSHIP IN AQUITANIA

The first chronological peg in Tibullus 1.7 is the date of Messalla's campaign in Aquitania. The opening lines of the poem appear as they are printed in most modern editions:

hunc cecinere diem Parcae, fatalia nentes
stamina non ulli dissoluenda deo,
hunc fore, Aquitanas posset qui fundere gentes,
quem tremere fortis milite uictus Atur.
euenere: nouos pubes Romana triumphos

⁸ Ovid's testimony is explicitly rejected by F. Leo, *GGA* 160 (1898) 723–4 (= *Ausgewählte Kleine Schriften* 2 [Rome, 1960], 180–1), who takes Prop. 2.31 as establishing a *terminus ante quem* of 9 October 28 B.C. for Propertius' first book: 'Die Zeit von II 31 aber ist ein Eckstein in der Geschichte der römischen Elegie, denn sie führt Ovids Angabe über die *διαδοχή* der römischen Elegiker auf das richtige Mass zurück und beweist dass Properz I vor Tibull I erschienen ist; so wichtig für die Literaturgeschichte wie es für Ovids allgemeine Vorstellung unerheblich war.' This view is accepted by P. Fedeli, *Sesto Properzio: Il primo libro delle elegie* (Florence, 1980), 10. Among commentators on either poet, only G. Luck, *P. Ovidius Naso: Tristia* (Heidelberg, 1977), on *Tr.* 4.10.53, supports Ovid's accuracy: 'die Reihenfolge ist Gallus Tibullus Properz Ovid.'

⁹ For example, Smith (n. 5), 31; Murgatroyd (n. 5), 3; R. Maltby (n. 5), 39; F. Della Corte, *Tibullo: Le elegie* (Milan, 1980), ix.

¹⁰ The operative metaphor in *successor*, as in *Tr.* 2.467 *successi*, is of one who follows in office: cf. *OLD* s.vv. 'successor' a, 'succedo' 5a. Not surprisingly, this metaphor appears to be unique to Ovid in such a context. As is frequently noted, Ovid is more liberal than the other Augustan poets in his use of legal and technical terminology; cf. E. J. Kenney, 'Ovid and the law', *YCS* 21 (1969), 243–63.

uidit et euinctos bracchia capta duces:
at te uictrices laurus, Messalla, gerentem
portabat nitidis currus eburnus equis.

(1.7.1 8)

The poem is a genethliakon, celebrating the birthday of Messalla (*hunc diem*) and referring to the triumph that he was awarded for his victory in Aquitania.¹¹ The first question to address is when that campaign took place, and then we must consider whether these lines refer to the triumph as having already taken place or, as I shall argue, as yet to happen.

The only other ancient testimony about Messalla's campaign in Aquitania is found in Appian, in the fourth book of the *Civil Wars*. His account seems quite explicit as to the sequence of events:

καὶ περὶ Ἄκτιον ναυαρχήσαντα κατὰ τοῦ Ἀντωνίου στρατηγὸν ἐπεμψεν (sc. Μεσσάλαν) ἐπὶ Κελτοῦς ἀφισταμένους καὶ νικήσαντι ἔδωκε θριαμβεῦσαι. (App. *BCiv.* 4.38)

after the battle of Actium, where he held a naval command against Antony, Octavian sent him [sc. Messalla] as a general against the Celts, who were in revolt, and awarded him a triumph for his victory over them.

The simplest and most obvious interpretation of this passage would thus locate the Aquitanian campaign in the year following Actium, a period when several of Octavian's generals were active in other venues. But this interpretation of Appian's testimony is rejected by most historians. Messalla's triumph is registered in the *Fasti Capitolini* for 25 September of the year 27,¹² and the view, first ventured by Mommsen,¹³ that the campaign immediately preceded the triumph in 28 or earlier in 27 is now almost universally accepted.¹⁴ Syme is most adamant on the point: 'the *Acta Triumphalia* with September 25 of the year 27 indicate the tenure 28/7, which should never have been doubted'.¹⁵ But there is room for doubt. It is not a necessary inference that triumph must follow victory in short order. In fact, there are many examples in the record of a considerable lapse of time between the campaigns for which triumphs were awarded and the actual celebration.¹⁶ Most notably, Messalla's co-triumphator in the year 27, Marcus Licinius Crassus, was celebrating a victory in Thrace that took place two years earlier in 29.¹⁷ In the

¹¹ The characterization by F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1972), 166 is particularly apt, 'a genethliakon which includes a triumph poem'.

¹² *CIL* I², p. 50.

¹³ T. Mommsen, *Römisches Geschichte* (Berlin, 1904), 5.72.

¹⁴ Cf. O. Hirschfeld, 'Aquitane in der Römerzeit', *Sitzb. der Berliner Akademie* 16 (1896), 433 4 (= *Kleine Schriften* [Berlin, 1913], 214 15); J. Hammer, *Prolegomena to an Edition of the Panegyricus Messalae. The Military and Political Career of M. Valerius Messala Corvinus* (Diss. Columbia, 1925), 46 48; J. F. Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul: The Three Provinces, 58 B.C. – A.D. 260* (London, 1983), 121. It is the consensus view of Tibullus' recent commentators, and it is also the chronology to be found, for example, in *OCD*³, 1580 and *Der Neue Pauly* 12/1.1110. Others are less certain: for example, C. Jullian, *Histoire de la Gaule IV: Le Gouvernement de Rome* (Paris, 1921), 64, is ambivalent, while the wording of E. Gruen, 'The expansion of the empire under Augustus', in A. K. Bowman, E. Champlin, and A. Lintott (edd.), *Cambridge Ancient History* 10 (Cambridge, 1996²), 169, 'a few years later [sc. than the attack on the Salassi in 34]', and C. Goudineau, 'Gaul', in Bowman et al., 489, 'shortly after 30 B.C.' is non committal. R. Hanslik, *RE* 8A (1955), 147, is virtually alone in pressing for the earlier date.

¹⁵ R. Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1986), 210.

¹⁶ Hanslik (n. 14), 149.

¹⁷ On Crassus' career, see E. Groag, *RE* 13.1 (1926), 283 5; *PIR*² L 186. Dio reports (51.25.2) that Augustus granted him the distinction of a triumph, but denied the title of *imperator*.

previous year 28, C. Calvisius Sabinus celebrated his triumph for the victories he won while he was proconsul in Spain in 31.¹⁸ Similar delays were not unheard of, even during the Republic.¹⁹ In the cases of Crassus, Sabinus, and Messalla, the reason for delay seems clear. The year 29, when Messalla might have expected his triumph, was otherwise occupied, when Octavian celebrated two triumphs and presumably did not choose to share the honour with anyone; recognition of his generals had to be deferred to a later date. But in the year 28, as we shall see, Messalla was elsewhere in the East. The year 27 thus presented the first opportunity for Octavian to reward his lieutenant for the victory in Aquitania. There is therefore no reason to date the victories alluded to by Tibullus to the year 28 or 27, as Syme would have it; rather they should be assigned to the period immediately following Actium, as indicated by Dio. The allusion to the Aquitanian campaign provides a terminus of 30 for the composition of this poem, not 28 or 27. The allusion to the triumph is another matter.

II. PREDICTING TRIUMPH

Lines 5–8 of the elegy seem to refer unambiguously to Messalla's triumph as a past event:

... nouos pubes Romana triumphos
uidit et euinctos bracchia capta duces:
at te uictrices laurus, Messalla, gerentem
portabat nitidis currus eburnus equis.

On the standard interpretation, *nouos* ... *triumphos* and *euinctos* ... *duces* refer to Messalla's triumphal procession itself, and the plural *triumphos*, then, must be a poetic plural.²⁰ But the text and its interpretation are problematic here. The contrast pointed by *at* in line 7 between the captives, who wore chains, and Messalla, who wore laurels, is rhetorically weak. So too is the reference to a past event when the Parcae, with whom the poem opens, are forecasting the future. On these grounds, Scaliger preferred to read *portabit*,²¹ which is found in one humanist manuscript.²² Among modern editors only Luck in his recent Teubner prints it, rightly, for it does make perfect rhetorical sense. If we read the future tense here, *nouos* ... *triumphos* then refers not to Messalla's triumph, but to other triumphs (a true plural), most

¹⁸ Also receiving a triumph in 28 was C. Carrinas for victories in Gaul in 30, at the same time as Messalla was active in the southwest.

¹⁹ Lentulus Spinther had to wait two to three years for his triumph in 51; cf. Shackleton Bailey on Cic. *Att.* 5.21.4.

²⁰ Cf. e.g. Murgatroyd (n. 5) and Maltby (n. 5), ad loc.

²¹ J. J. Scaliger, *Castigationes* (Paris, 1600), ad loc.: 'tamquam nondum triumphauit. Nam ex persona Parcarum haec dicit *μμετικώς*. Non enim in hac elegia celebratur triumphus Messallae, sed natalis. Ideo Parcarum interiecta mentio. Nascentibus enim fata a Parcis iuebantur.'

²² *Portabat* is read by all editors since Lachmann, except Luck, and only Lenz even reports *portabit*. It is found in D (Berlin, Diez. B. Sant. 39b), a fifteenth century manuscript no better and no worse than others. Variant or early conjecture? It scarcely matters in this tradition, for which see R. H. Rouse and M. D. Reeve in L. D. Reynolds (ed.), *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford, 1983), 420–5. In any case the author of the conjecture would not have known the date of Messalla's triumph. Although Luck prints *portabit* in his edition, he never justifies this reading and reviewers passed over it in silence. In the same line we should probably accept *niueis* against the *paradosis*; cf. P. Fedeli in his review of Luck, *Gnomon* 63 (1991), 313.

likely the two celebrated by Octavian in the year 29.²³ The fasti record no triumphs for the years 32–30, and no wonder: with the world at war there could be no such celebrations. But in 29 Rome saw triumphal celebrations again, and more were to come with Octavian rewarding his proconsuls, including Messalla. The point would be clearer if, together with *portabit* in 8, we read *ac* for *at* at the beginning of line: ‘Rome has recently seen triumphs, proclaim the Fates; you, too, Messalla, will ride in procession.’²⁴ The poem celebrates, not the recent occurrence of Messalla’s triumph; it celebrates his victories in Gaul and the anticipated triumph to follow.

III. PAVING THE ROAD

The second reference to a datable event occurs at the close of the poem, where Tibullus praises the road construction sponsored by Messalla on the Via Latina:

nec taceat monumenta uiae, quem Tuscula tellus
candidaque antiquo detinet Alba Lare.
namque opibus congesta tuis hic glarea dura
sternitur, hic apta iungitur arte silex.
te canet agricola, a magna cum uenerit urbe
serus inoffensum rettuleritque pedem. (1.7.57–62)

This passage is the only evidence for the sponsorship of this public work by Messalla.²⁵ It appears to describe a paving project on the Via Latina from Rome as far as Tusculum, a distance of about 24 kilometres. Many scholars have connected this passage with Suetonius’ description of Augustus’ renovations of the major roads and arteries of Italy (*Aug.* 30.1), a programme that he began in 27 B.C.:²⁶ *quo autem facilius undique urbs adiretur, desumpta sibi Flaminia uia Arimino tenus munienda, reliquas triumphalibus uiris ex manubiali pecunia sternendas distribuit*. Since all modern commentators on Tibullus assume that Poem 1.7 was composed after the celebration of Messalla’s triumph in 27 B.C., it is not surprising that they also accept the identification of this road repair project as part of Augustus’ plan. On this interpretation, Messalla was one of the *triumphales uiri* who were assigned portions of the renovation project. If this hypothesis could be proved, it would further substantiate a date of c. 26 B.C. for the release of Tibullus’ first book; but there are many reasons for scepticism on this point and some for outright disbelief.

No epigraphic evidence attests to any such activity by Messalla, but several inscribed milestones found along the route of the Via Latina are evidence for work performed by his contemporary, C. Calvisius Sabinus.²⁷ Like Messalla, Sabinus also celebrated a triumph after Octavian, with his coming in the year 28 for victories in Spain.²⁸ No extant source from antiquity names any of the *uiri triumphales* whom

²³ I am reminded by Francis Cairns that this would be a unique reference to Octavian in Tibullus’ work.

²⁴ Cf. Ov. *Pont.* 2.1.57, predicting Germanicus’ triumph, *te quoque uictorem Tarpeias scandere in arces/laeta coronatis Roma uidebit equis*. Predictions of triumphs, presumably made with some assurance of their likelihood, are not uncommon in the poets: e.g. Tibullus on Messalinus in 2.5.115ff. or Ovid on Caius Caesar in *Ars Am.* 1.213ff.

²⁵ Two passages in Martial 8.3.5 *et cum rupta situ Messallae saxa iacebunt* and 10.2.9 *marmora Messallae findit caprificus*—have sometimes been taken to refer to the Via Latina, but G. McCracken, ‘Tibullus, Messalla and the Via Latina’, *AJP* 53 (1932), 345–6, rightly rejects this interpretation.

²⁶ On the background, see McCracken (n. 25).

²⁷ *CIL* 10.6895, 10.6897, 10.6899–6901; *AE* 1969/70, 89.

²⁸ *CIL* 1, p. 18.

Augustus enlisted in this programme, according to Suetonius. But the same evidence that led scholars to include Messalla in this project has also led to the inclusion of Sabinus as one of those assigned a portion of the road repair project.²⁹ On this hypothesis, the repair of the Via Latina in 26 was divided between two triumphators, Messalla and Sabinus.³⁰ Before we accept that Tibullus alludes to Messalla's participation, however, we should first reconsider the validity of the assumptions underlying this reconstruction of Augustus' road repair project.

In the *Res Gestae*, the princeps himself refers only to his own supervision of the repair of the Via Flaminia, with all of its bridges (*RG* 20.5): *consul septimum uiam Flaminiam ab urbe Ariminum refeci pontesque omnes praeter Muluam et Minuciam*.³¹ There is no mention of a role played by any others, nor of other roads repaired. That is perhaps understandable in Augustus' record of his own accomplishments, but another explanation suggests itself in the context of the only other reference to this project, an extensive description by Cassius Dio:

ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῷ προειρημένῳ ἔτει τὰς ὁδοὺς τὰς ἔξω τοῦ τείχους δυσπορεύτους ὑπ' ἀμελίας ὁρῶν οὐσας τὰς μὲν ἄλλας ἄλλοις τισὶ τῶν βουλευτῶν ἐπισκευάσαι τοῖς οἰκείοις τέλεσι προσέταξε, τῆς δὲ δὴ Φλαμινίας αὐτός, ἐπειδὴ περ ἐκστρατεύσειν δι' αὐτῆς ἡμελλεν, ἐπεμελήθη. καὶ ἡ μὲν εὐθὺς τότε ἐγένετο, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ εἰκόνας αὐτῷ ἐφ' ἀψίδων ἐν τε τῇ τοῦ Τιβερίου γεφύρᾳ καὶ ἐν Ἀριμίνῳ ἐποιήθησαν· αἱ δ' ἄλλαι ὕστερον, εἴτ' οὖν πρὸς δημοσίου, ἐπειδὴ μηδεὶς τῶν βουλευτῶν ἡδέως ἀνήλσκειν, εἴτε καὶ πρὸς τοῦ Αὐγούστου τις εἰπεῖν ἐθέλει, ἐπισκευάσθησαν. (53.22.1)

In the year already named, perceiving that the roads outside the walls had become difficult to travel as the result of neglect, he ordered various senators to repair the others at their own expense, and he himself looked after the Flaminian Way, since he was going to lead an army out by that route. This road was finished promptly at that time, and statues of Augustus were accordingly erected on arches on the bridge over the Tiber and at Ariminum; but the other roads were repaired later, at the expense either of the public (for none of the senators liked to spend money on them) or of Augustus, as one chooses to put it.

Historians and commentators alike adduce this passage as further evidence for repairs made by Messalla and Sabinus,³² but it offers no support for this hypothesis at all. Dio makes no mention of *triumphales uiri* or *manubiae*. On Dio's testimony, in fact, Augustus' attempt to involve members of the aristocracy in this public works venture was a failure and he had to underwrite the whole project himself. This set the pattern for subsequent emperors, as it became the norm that the work of construction and repair resided with them, as was acknowledged in the dedicatory milestones of the period. The idea that private citizens should shoulder that burden was extraordinary. Under the Republic this had been a task for the consuls, at least for the roads in

²⁹ For example, R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939), 402. T. P. Wiseman, 'Roman republican road building', *PBSR* 38 (1970), 150, n. 218: 'The rest of the Latina was entrusted to C. Calvisius Sabinus (*CIL*, x, 6895-6901), and finished by Augustus himself (*ibid.*, 6903-4).' In his note on 1.7.57-8, Murgatroyd (n. 5) suggests a third name, L. Arruntius, adducing *CIL* 10.5055. But there is no evidence that he had celebrated a triumph by this time and the text of this inscription offers little support: *L. Arruntius L. f. / Cos X[V] uir / sacreis [faci]undis. uia. semi[ta]s. f. [aci]undum / clouacam [refi]ciundam / DS[P]C.*

³⁰ This reconstruction of events is found in all of Tibullus' modern commentators.

³¹ For Augustus' road projects, cf. T. Pekáry, *Untersuchungen zu den römischen Reichsstrassen* (Bonn, 1968), 71-7.

³² Most recently, J. W. Rich, *Cassius Dio: The Augustan Settlement* (Roman History 53.55.9) (Warminster, 1990), ad loc., who identifies τισὶ τῶν βουλευτῶν as men 'who had recently celebrated triumphs ... Parts of the Via Latina were restored by C. Calvisius Sabinus ... and by Messalla.'

Italy.³³ It should be noted that Dio does not contradict Suetonius, who only reports that Augustus *attempted* to recruit partners in his road work, not that he succeeded nor that they completed their assignments. If Dio is correct, and there is no reason to assume otherwise, then there are no grounds for connecting the epigraphic evidence of Sabinus' repairs with the year 27. And in fact, there are reasons to date Sabinus' work much earlier.

C. Calvisius Sabinus was a stout supporter of Julius Caesar, under whom he served in Greece in 48 B.C.³⁴ The praetorship followed, probably in 46, and then the proconsulship of Africa in 45. He was in Rome in 44 and on the Ides of March tried to defend Caesar from his assassins. He first aligned himself with Antony, but later joined Octavian, exactly when is not known. The consulship came in 39 and in the years that followed, Sabinus played an important role in Octavian's consolidation of his hold on Italy as admiral in the campaign against Sextus Pompey in 38. At the conclusion of that war in 36, Octavian placed Sabinus, probably with the title of Prefect, in charge of restoring order in Italy, which was then being ravaged by brigands and outlaws, a task that, according to Appian (*BCiv.* 5.132), he completed within a year.³⁵ Sabinus was a powerful and important figure long before Octavian sent him to Spain in 31 and rewarded him with a triumph in 28. The milestones that record his work on the Via Latina are consistent with the public profile of a consul of the Republic: *C. Calvisius C. f./Sabinus cos./imp.*³⁶ Their wording parallels that of other milestones of the late Republic, which would ordinarily lead us to date this work to the year of his consulship, 39.³⁷ The only reason to subscribe to a later date is the inclusion of the title *imperator*, since it is supposed that he could only have carried the title after his triumph in 28, but this is far from certain. If Sabinus did win an earlier acclamation as *imperator*, the most likely occasion would have been his governorship of North Africa in 45, and he might have used the title even if he was not awarded a triumph then. We know of several individuals in the late Republic who used the title without having been awarded a triumph.³⁸ It is very difficult to believe that Sabinus could have erected these markers in the year 27 B.C. or later, when the title *imperator* was increasingly limited to the princeps and members of his family.³⁹ Likewise it would have been remarkable for Sabinus not to have commemorated the astonishing fact that uniquely in the annals of the state he had financed the Via Latina project out of his own pocket: we would expect the milestones to carry the phrase *ex manubiis*. A more economical hypothesis would date Sabinus' activity on the Via Latina to an

³³ Cf. Pekáry (n. 31), 46–53.

³⁴ For the career of Sabinus, cf. F. Münzer, *RE* 3.1 (1897), 1411–12; *PIR*² C 352.

³⁵ Cf. *ILS* 2488 *et Sabino praef. . . / [au]xsiliariei Hispan[er]*, connected with Sabinus' action by T. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* (Leipzig, 1871³), 1075, n. 1.

³⁶ *CIL* X 6901 = *ILS* 889.

³⁷ For examples of inscriptions on *miliaria* of the Republic, see A. Degraffi, *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae* (Florence, 1957), 251–65.

³⁸ Cf. Mommsen (n. 35), 125.

³⁹ There are some isolated instances suggesting that the title might still be used by individuals outside the imperial family in the early years of the principate: cf. Mommsen (n. 35), 125–6; A. Rosenberg, *RE* 9.1 (1916), 1144. An inscription of A.D. 3 (*ILS* 120) refers to L. Passienus Rufus (cos. 4 B.C.) as *imperator*, but it may be significant that this was set up in Africa, not Italy. Tac. *Ann.* 3.74.4 is further evidence that there could be exceptions to the imperial monopoly. According to him, *concessit quibusdam et Augustus id uocabulum, ac tunc Tiberius Blaesus postremum*.

earlier period of his career at a time when he could have borne both titles of *consul* and *imperator*.⁴⁰

Once Sabinus' repairs to the Via Latina are dissociated from Augustus' work in the mid- to late twenties, there is no evidence to link Tibullus' allusion to Messalla's work to that date. In fact, as Tibullus' describes it, Messalla's contribution to Augustus' renovation of the road network would have to be described as rather paltry—a mere 24 kilometres of paving from Rome to Tusculum. It is also not easy to explain Messalla's activity on this front in the year 26, a year in which he annoyed Augustus by resigning his position as *praefectus urbi* in early January.⁴¹ A more likely scenario would situate this work during the term of Messalla's consulship in 31. Like Sabinus before him, that is when Messalla undertook this small project, renovating the stretch of road that would take him from Rome to Tusculum, where his family had ties and he owned a villa.⁴² On this interpretation, the topical references in Tib. 1.7 take us to the period 31–29, not 26–25. And consideration of the central portion of the poem supports this chronology.

IV. MESSALLA IN THE EAST

After his prediction of Messalla's triumph in the opening twelve lines of the poem, Tibullus goes on to evoke the eastern regions of the empire, citing landmarks in Asia Minor (the river Cydnus and Taurus mountains), the Near East (Syria and Tyre), and the Nile in Egypt:

an te, Cydne, canam, tractis qui leniter undis
caeruleus placidis per uada serpis aquis,
quantus et aetherio contingens uertice nubes
frigidus intonosos Taurus alat Cilicas?
quid referam, ut uolitet crebras intacta per urbes
alba Palaestino sancta columba Syro,
utque maris uastum prospectet turribus aequor
prima ratem uentis credere docta Tyros,
qualis et, arentes cum findit Sirius agros,
fertilis aestiua Nilus abundet aqua? (Tib. 1.7.13–22)

It is generally acknowledged that Tibullus is alluding to some expedition or series of expeditions by Messalla in the East. In spite of many efforts by scholars to tie these lines to specific dates, it must be admitted that we have no knowledge of when this eastern expedition took place. A number of historians, following the chronology that locates the Aquitanian campaign in 28/27, have supposed that Tibullus here alludes to activity by Messalla in the East earlier, in the period immediately following Actium. The testimony of Dio is adduced to support this hypothesis. In Book 51 he describes an uprising in the east, staged by a group of gladiators at Cyzicus, who were allegedly being held in preparation for Antony's expected victory celebrations. Inexplicably, according to Dio, when others who owed much to Antony were rushing to abandon him in the aftermath of Actium, these gladiators made their

⁴⁰ Pekáry (n. 31), 71–2, notes how extraordinary would be the circumstances surrounding the dating of these milestones to 27: a private citizen, financing a public road and erecting *miliaria* commemorating himself.

⁴¹ Cf. Syme (n. 15), 211–12, A. Valvo, 'M. Valerio Messalla Corvino negli studi più recenti', *ANRW* 2.30.3 (1983), 1673–4.

⁴² As noted by G. Luck, *Properz und Tibull: Liebeselegien* (Zürich and Stuttgart, 1964) on Tib. 1.7.57–8.

way to Syria in a vain attempt to join Antony in Egypt. Eventually they were obliged by Quintus Didius, the governor of Syria, to settle in Daphne on the outskirts of Antioch, pending final resolution of the matter by Caesar. Dio goes on to describe the sequel:

καὶ οἱ μὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ Μεσσάλου ὕστερον ἀπατηθέντες ἐπέμφθησαν ἄλλος ἄλλοσε ὡς καὶ ἐς τὰ στρα-
τόπεδα καταλεχθισόμενοι, καὶ ἐκ τρόπου δὴ τινος ἐπιτηδείου ἐφθάρησαν (Dio 51.7.7)

these men were later deceived by Messalla and sent to various places under the pretext that they were enlisted in the legions, and were then put out of the way in some convenient manner.

The gladiators were deceived by Messalla later, but how much later? Syme, following the argument of earlier scholars,⁴³ thinks not much later, asserting that Messalla *must* have succeeded Didius as governor of Syria in 30/29 or 29/28.⁴⁴ That chronology is not secure, but it is consistent with the evidence for dating Messalla's Aquitanian campaign to 31/30. M. Tullius Cicero, son of the orator and suffect consul in 30, is the next attested holder of this office in 27. On this chronology, Messalla was dispatched to Gaul to suppress rebellion in Aquitania after the campaign in Actium, and soon after he left to deal with matters in the East.

The allusion to that mission in Tibullus is rather vague: no mention of victories accomplished or anticipated, of works planned or completed, of glories won or contemplated. Various explanations may suggest themselves for this absence of specificity—poetic licence or lack of information, for example—but one not thus far ventured is this: the expedition to the East had not yet taken place. The subjunctive *an te . . . canam* is usually taken as purely deliberative, referring to an alternative choice of topic for this poem from among past events. That is unlikely from both a historical and a rhetorical perspective. If the poem really had been composed on the occasion of Messalla's triumph in 27 B.C., how can we explain the prominence of Messalla's eastern command in its structure? The central portion of the poem goes on to digress into a hymn to Osiris, occasioned by the reference to the Nile in line 22. As a poem of praise addressed to Messalla on the occasion of his triumph for Aquitania, this is remarkably ineffective, deflecting attention from his major military accomplishment in Gaul to less glorious activities in the East. This arrangement makes even less rhetorical sense if we accept Syme's chronology and date the action in Syria before the Aquitanian expedition. A different context is suggested by the likely dating of the poem to mid- to late in the year 29. For the occasion of his birthday, on a day in the year unknown to us, Tibullus celebrates his victory and impending triumph with a poem. Afterwards, Messalla is headed for the East and possibly other accomplishments as yet unknown. *an te . . . canam*—perhaps one day he will sing of these too.

It is also worth noting that the extensive hymn to Osiris in lines 29–48 ill accords with conditions in Rome in the time-period posited by Syme and others. The Egyptian cults of Isis, Osiris, and Serapis began to make inroads at Rome in the Sullan period, but intermittently met with acts of suppression. In 59 B.C., for instance, the Senate ordered the destruction of a shrine to Isis that had been erected on the Capitol, and repeated the order again in 58 after it had apparently been rebuilt.⁴⁵ Some mitigation

⁴³ Especially J. Hammer, *Prolegomena to an Edition of the Panegyricus Messalae. The Military and Political Career of M. Valerius Messala Corvinus* (Diss. Columbia, 1925), 46–8.

⁴⁴ Syme (n. 15), 209.

⁴⁵ Cf. G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Munich, 1912²), 351–4 for the relevant texts.

of official antipathy to the cult is indicated by the decision of the triumvirs to erect a temple to Serapis and Isis, although there is no evidence that it was ever built.⁴⁶ Private shrines, however, must have continued to be built during the reign of Augustus, since there is abundant evidence for the popularity of the cults in literary references. Nonetheless, Augustus apparently felt that he had to demonstrate at least some limited deference to traditional religious sentiment. In the year 28, the princeps banned the cult of Isis within the city of Rome (Dio 53.2.4), a ban that was later extended by Agrippa to a mile beyond the pomerium (Dio 54.6.6).⁴⁷ In this context, we may well ask how likely it is that Tibullus penned a hymn to Osiris as the central component in his poem of praise for one of Augustus' right-hand men in the year 27, only one year after this cult was banned within the city? Once again, the circumstances of the poem suit better an earlier date in 29 B.C.

V. TIBULLUS AS GALLUS' SUCCESSOR

The evidence thus far considered tends to confirm the chronology provided by Ovid in *Tristia* 4.10. That passage must be considered in conjunction with an earlier reference by Ovid to the same succession. In the second book of the *Tristia*, the long elegy addressed to Augustus in defence of his poetry, Ovid sketches a brief history of the poets who wrote love elegy without incurring any opprobrium from the princeps. He begins, naturally enough with Gallus:

non fuit opprobrio celebrasse Lycorida Gallo,
 sed linguam nimio non tenuisse mero.
 credere iuranti durum putat esse Tibullus,
 sic etiam de se quod neget illa uiro.
 fallere custodes idem docuisse fatetur
 seque sua miserum nunc ait arte premi.
 saepe, uelut gemmam dominae signumue probaret,
 per causam meminit se tetigisse manum;
 utque refert, digitis saepe est nutuque locutus,
 et tacitam mensae duxit in orbe notam;
 et quibus e sucis abeat de corpore liuor,
 impresso fieri qui solet ore, docet:
 denique ab incauto nimium petit ille marito,
 se quoque uti seruet, peccet ut illa minus.
 scit cui latretur, cum solus obambulet, ipsas
 cur totiens clausas excreet ante fores,
 multaque dat furti talis praecepta docetque
 qua nuptae possint fallere ab arte uiros.
 non fuit hoc illi fraudi, legiturque Tibullus
 et placet, et iam te principe notus erat.
 inuenies eadem blandi praecepta Properti:
 destrictus minima nec tamen ille nota est.
 his ego successi, quoniam praestantia candor
 nomina uiuorum dissimulare iubet. (Tr. 2.445–68)

After Gallus, Ovid passes immediately to Tibullus, then mentions Propertius much later in line 65, before adding his own name as the successor to these three. The sequence here is the same as later in *Tristia* 4.10, but the chronological element is not predominant. Instead Ovid focuses upon the amatory content of the elegiac poetry of his predecessors, emphasizing this element over others because it is the

⁴⁶ Dio 47.15.5.

⁴⁷ Cf. Dio 53.2.4 for the ban of 28, and on its extension, cf. Dio 53.2.4.

aspect of the tradition that he himself cultivated in the *Ars Amatoria* and it is this element that he endeavours to justify in this poem. Interestingly, it is neither Gallus nor Propertius whom Ovid cites extensively as illustrative of the genre in lines 447ff. Instead Ovid cleverly paraphrases parts of Tibullus' own poems, chiefly the fifth and the sixth of the first book, to represent the familiar topoi of amatory elegy—for example, the faithless oath, secret conversations at the dinner table, and precautions against discovery of the affair.⁴⁸ It is worth considering that the Tibullan element predominates in this passage not only because Ovid had formed a personal preference for his work over that of Gallus and Propertius, but because in literary historical terms he judged him to have set the standard for love elegy following Gallus.

And once again Ovid provides us with precise chronological support for taking Tibullus as next in line after Gallus. In the opening couplet of this selection, Ovid makes the point that it was not his poetry that caused Gallus' downfall, even though it was famous—that is surely the point of the phrase *celebrasse Lycorida* in line 445. He makes a similar point with Tibullus in lines 463–4:

non fuit hoc illi fraudi, legiturque Tibullus
et placet, et iam te principe notus erat.

Tibullus, of course, unlike Gallus, was not punished for any crime, but if his poetry had been objectionable, he could have been punished, for he was, as Ovid puts it, 'already famous when you were princeps'.⁴⁹ Ovid's use of *princeps* is significant. Either we must assume that he means nothing specific by it, thereby reducing the line to vacuousness, or the phrase *iam te principe* would have carried some specific associations for a Roman reader. *Princeps* was not a formal title conferred by act of the Senate, but an informal designation adopted by Augustus because it suited his position in the state and at the same time had positive associations in the context of republican institutions. No precise date can be assigned to his use of it, but there are indications that it was earlier rather than later. Augustus caused himself to be enrolled in the census of 28 B.C. as *princeps senatus*,⁵⁰ and when viewed from the perspective of Ovid's exile in A.D. 9, the nexus of events in 29/28, when Augustus returned to Rome, celebrated his triumph, and entered the consulship with Agrippa, marked the transition to a new era. Augustus himself employs this manner of designating his rule.⁵¹ By the beginning of 27, when Augustus restored

⁴⁸ With *Tr.* 2.447 8, compare *Tib.* 1.6.7 10 *illa quidem iurata negat, sed credere durum est:/sic etiam de me pernegat usque uiro./ipse miser docui quo posset ludere pacto/custodes: heu heu, nunc premor arte mea.* With *Tr.* 2.453 4, compare *Tib.* 1.2.21 22 *illa uiro coram nutus conferre loquaces/blandaue compositis abdere uerba notis.* With *Tr.* 2.455 6, compare *Tib.* 1.6.13 14 *tunc sucos herbasque dedi, quis liuor abiret,/quem facit impresso mutua dente Venus.*

⁴⁹ At 464 Hall prints *tutus*, his own emendation, for *notus*. The correction is implausible, but even if accepted, it does not alter the sense of *te principe* or the probable chronological implications.

⁵⁰ Dio 53.1.3 *πρόκριτος τῆς γερονσίας ἐπεκλήθη*, *Res Gestae* 7 *princeps senatus fui usque ad eum diem quo scripseram haec per annos quadraginta.*

⁵¹ Cf. *Res Gestae* 13 *Ianum Quirinum . . . ter me principe senatus claudendum esse censuit, 32 plurimaeque aliae gentes expertae sunt p. R. fidem me principe.* This phraseology is echoed in other contemporaries such as Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.256 *et formidatam Parthis te principe Romam:* cf. Prop. 4.6.46; Ov. *Pont.* 4.12.40; L. Wickert, *RE* 22.2 (1954), 2057 9. In their notes on *Tr.* 2.464, Luck (n. 8) and S. G. Owen, *P. Ovidi Nasonis Tristium Liber Secundus* (Oxford, 1924) both recognize the chronological implications for Tibullus' career, which are baselessly rejected by, for example, Schanz Hosius 182.

to the magistrates, the Senate, and the people a semblance of their traditional roles, he would surely have been identified by recent posterity as *princeps*.

On the traditional dating of the publication of Tibullus' first book to 26 or 25 B.C., Ovid's statement here would have to be considered false. Augustus would have been known to Roman world as *princeps* for nearly five years before Tibullus became known outside a small circle. But with a date in 29 B.C. for the appearance of Tibullus I, Ovid's reference here is precise: Tibullus' first book of poetry was circulating during the early years of Augustus' principate, acquiring him fame as Gallus' successor in elegy.⁵²

VI. THE ROAD AHEAD

Quintilian's lapidary assessment (*Inst.* 10.1.93) is typical of the judgement in antiquity that Tibullus was the leading elegist in Latin: *mihī tersus atque elegans maxime uidetur auctor Tibullus*.⁵³ This judgement was shared by Ovid, whose tributes to Tibullus are numerous and sincere. Ovid never directly compares Tibullus with Propertius, but it is clear that he saw Tibullus as the earlier of the two. The intertextual relationship of Tibullus and Propertius can be profitably explored, of course, without establishing a firm chronological sequence, and due allowance must be made for the possibility of individual poems becoming known through recitations or private circulation. But the bias in favour of Propertius' priority that permeates most such discussions is not on firm ground. And some aspects of Tibullus' art might be more profitably considered in the setting of the end of the triumphal period. This opens the door to a better contextualized examination of the prominence of pastoral motifs in Tibullus and his relationship to Virgil's *Eclogues* and Gallus,⁵⁴ as well as a reconsideration of Messalla's role as patron and the absence of 'Augustan' themes in the elegies.⁵⁵ These traits have struck some critics as anomalies in a poet writing in the mid-twenties, but they are perhaps more comprehensible, and more interesting, in a poet concluding his first book in the immediate aftermath of Actium.

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⁵² There is a further indication of the appearance of the book in this period in the suggestion by F. Cairns, 'Tibullus, Messalla, and the *spica*', *Emerita* (1999), 230, that 10.67–8 refers to the closing of the temple of Janus in 29.

⁵³ Cf. Vell. Pat. 2.36.3 *Tibullusque et Naso, perfectissimi in forma operis sui*. L. Alfonsi, *Albio Tibullo e gli autori del 'Corpus Tibullianum'* (Milan, 1946), 1–11, is still worth consulting on ancient appraisals of Tibullus and see, more recently, F. Cairns, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (Cambridge, 1979), 1–6.

⁵⁴ F. Jacoby, 'Zur Entstehung der römischer Elegie', *RhM* 60 (1905) suggests that Tibullus picked up on the pastoral elements in Gallus, while Propertius focused on the mythological. See now Cairns (n. 53), 228, and, more recently, the same author's 'Stile e Contenuti di Tibullo ed Propertio', *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi su Albio Tibullo* (Rome, 1986), 47–59. The influence of the *Eclogues* has not infrequently been noted, for example, by U. von Wilamowitz Moellendorff, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* (Berlin, 1924), 1.237; Alfonsi (n. 53), 18, n. 1; Bright (n. 7), 11. But its full extent and significance await detailed explication.

⁵⁵ Alfonsi (n. 53), 13, n. 3: 'Non è escluso che sia stato almeno nei suoi primi inizi di sentimenti anti augustei, dato anche il precedente della spoliatura e poi il silenzio assoluto su Augusto, tanto più strano in quanto Propertio, l'altro elegiaco contemporaneo, verso Augusto invece si mostrò assai deferente, almeno in successive fasi di sua vita.' On this topic, see now the summary of the question in Maltby (n. 5), 53–5.